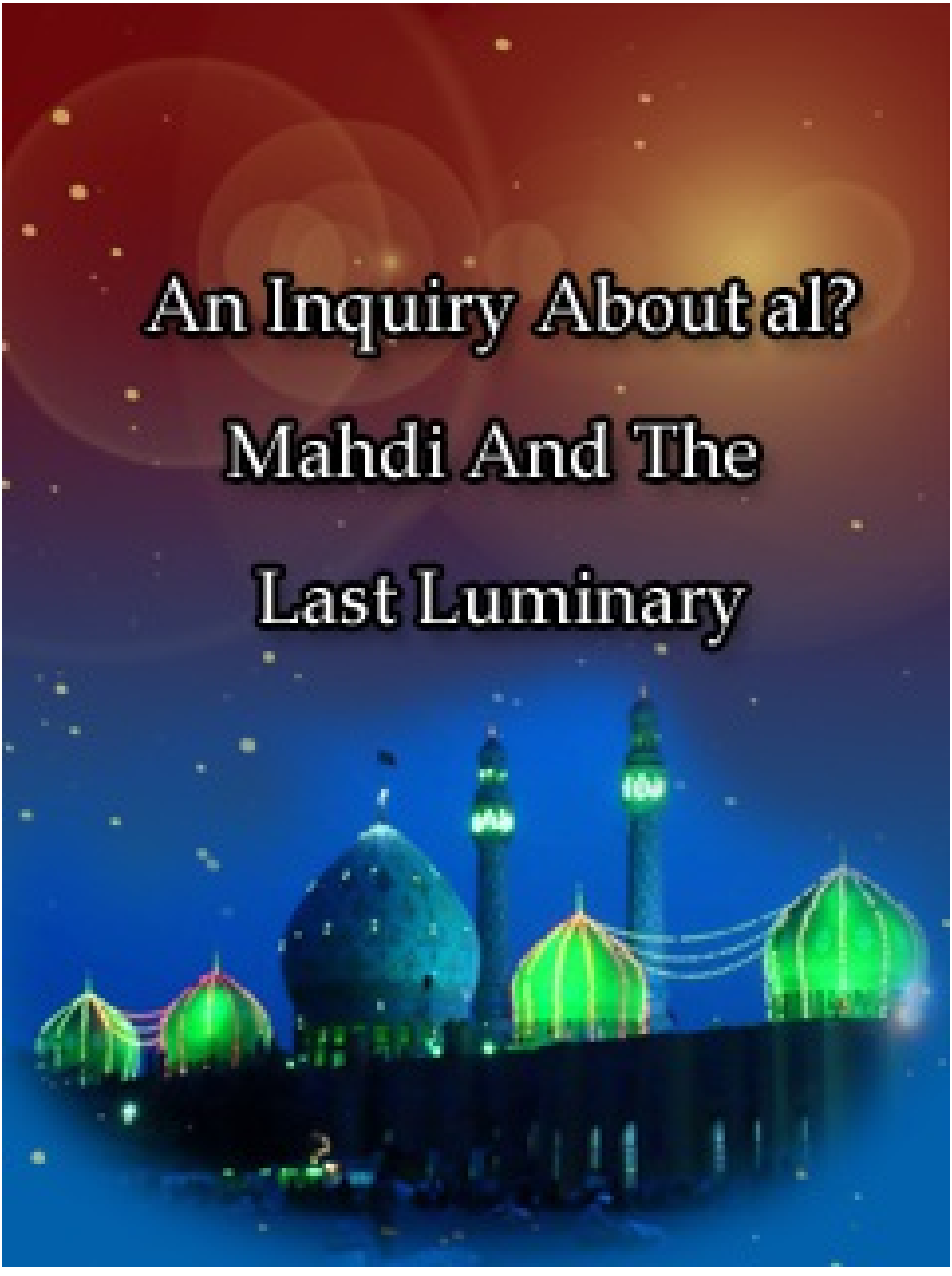

An Inquiry About al?
Mahdi And The
Last Luminary

بسم الله الرحمن الرحیم

An Inquiry About al Mahdi And The Last Luminary

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Contents

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ACKNOWLEDGMENT

And We desired to bestow a favor upon those who were deemed weak in the land , and to make them the Imams (Leaders of mankind) , and to make them the heirs . ((Quran , ۲۸ : ۵

Preface

The magnificent and auspicious celebration of the fifteenth of Sha�ban can be observed everywhere . Every place has been decorated . In every place joyful and cheerful gatherings can be seen . The enthusiasm and happiness of the Shiites on this . auspicious day is apparent everywhere

? Indeed , what day is revered like this day by people with such elation and glory

The fifteenth of Sha�ban is the day in which the Shiites saw the fulfillment of the glad tidings of the divine messengers . It is the day in which the good news of Islam , the . Quran and the traditions (ahadeeth) of the infallible Imams will take place

It is on his birthday that he will bring the east and west of the world to justice , and by . his powerful hand annihilate demons (�ifrit) , infidelity and irreligiousness

On this day , the authority of the Last Luminous Jewel of Allah will be established on the face of the earth . He it is who will decide the end of the long struggle between truth and falsehood . His appearance will mean a victory for truth and the annihilation . of falsehood

He is the same person who , by the will of Allah , will overpower fragile doctrines , and will pursue and

[accomplish the objectives of the Last Prophet Mohammed (s . a . w .) . [١

He will remove ignorance and class�discrimination from the world and will establish equality instead; he will exploit the earth�s resources , distribute them among the poor and make them sufficient .

The outburst of enthusiasm and happiness will at that time cause tears to flow down the cheeks of enthusiasts , and the lustrous and mournful eyes of the awaiting people will be filled with light .

Mahdism is the most genuine and fundamental Islamic belief , which even a person with a limited knowledge of Islam will surely accept .

Since it is obligatory for every Muslim to know the �Leader of the Age� Imam Mohammed al�Mahdi (a . s .) , [٢] it has been endeavored here – though in brief – to study the short history of this fundamental belief and present a brief introduction to the life of Hojjat�e�Haqq (The Rightful Proof of Allah) . We hope this meager �collection� , as a humble gift , will be accepted by the �Solomon of the Age� . ١٥th Sha�ban ١٣٩۶

The Good News

PART ١

There is no doubt that the Holy Quran is the book of Allah , and that all the Muslims of the world accept and obey its teachings and instructions .

When one opens this Book (Quran) and casts a glance at its verses , one will come to what seems to be a clear vista of the extraordinary , sensational and exciting future and end of the universe .

The

Holy Quran says that the ultimate mission of the Holy Prophet of Islam is to make this holy religion prevail over all other religions of the world; and one day this holy :aspiration will finally be fulfilled , as Holy Quran says

He it is Who sent His Apostle (Mohammed) with guidance and the religion of truth ,� that He might cause it to prevail over all religions , though the polytheists may be (averse� (Quran , ٩ : ٣٣

The divine book of the last Messenger of Allah gives the glad tidings that rule over the :earth shall finally belong to the righteous and virtuous servants of Allah

Surely the land is Allah�s; He causes such of His servants to inherit it as He pleases . (And the end is for those who guard (against evil) (Quran , ٧ : ١٢٨

(Know that Allah gives life to the earth after its death . (Quran ٥٧ : ١٧

: In interpretating (Tafseer) of this verse , Imam Mohammed al�Baqir says

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. Allah will quiken the earth with justice after its death in tyranny

The earth , which will be full of corruption , destruction and ignorance like a lifeless . body , will be revived with the glowing light of justice

: We also read in the Holy Quran

Allah has promised to those of you who believe and do good that He will most� certainly make them rulers in the earth as He made rulers those before them , and that He will most certainly establish

for them their religion which He has chosen for them , and that He will most certainly , after their fear , give them security in exchange . They shall serve Me , not associating (aught with Me . � (Quran , ۲۴ : ۵۵

They desire to put out the light of Allah with their mouths , but Allah will perfect His� (light , though the unbelievers may be averse� (Quran , ۶۱ : ۸

These are some short examples of the divine glad tidings mentioned in the Holy Quran . By studying these matters and tens of other similar matters , it shall be perceived that the Islamic message will reach its complete fulfillment when these holy aspirations and desires have taken place . All fabricated and superstitious objectives will disappear and then only Islam , the unique and true religion , will be the faith of the people in the east and west of the world . Injustice , oppression and inequality shall vanish and instead justice and equality which is the law of the creation of the world will be established everywhere . The sovereignty of the divine caliphs (khulafaa) will be established in all the corners of the world . The light of the guidance of Allah will . shine and the earth belong to the virtuous ones

Yes , the Holy Quran gives the good news that a day will come when all Muslims of the . world shall wait enthusiastically for such a time

Next to the Holy Quran , the sayings

of the Holy Prophet and the Honorable Imams are the most important and worthiest treasure of Islamic learning . For every Muslim , it is obligatory and essential to follow and obey the sayings of the Holy Prophet and the Holy Imams since obeying their : commands is particularly and clearly mentioned in the Book of Allah

O you who believe ! obey Allah and obey the Apostle and those in authority from� (among you ! � (Quran , ۴ : ۴۹

! ? Does Allah give the order to obey anyone other than the infallible

In the sea of jewels of Islamic traditions , glad tidings on the Government of Justice can be seen . Moreover , special mention has been made regarding the �Divine . Revolution� and the divine leader who will fulfill this holy aspiration

: The Holy Prophet of Islam said

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Even when the entire duration of the world�s existence has already been� exhausted , and one solitaire day is left to embrace the eve of Doomsday , Allah will expand that day and make it swell to such a length of time as to accommodate the ultimate reign of a person out of my holy progeny who will be called by my name and my agnomen (Abol�Qasim) . He will then make the earth abound with peace and justice as it

[will have been fraught with injustice and tyranny before him . �[۳

The context of this precious tradition reveals a definite good news more than anything else , and informs the people of the Government of Justice , Achievement . and Divine Promises as mentioned in most of the Shiite and Sunnite sources

: In another tradition , the Holy Prophet told Ameer al�Momineen Ali (a . s .) , saying

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There will be twelve Guides (aimmah) after me , the first of whom is you , O Ali , and� the last one will be the Support (al�Qaim) , who with Almighty Allah�s grace , will [gain victory over the whole of the east and west of the world . �[۴

The Purified Imams reminded people in several traditions of the significance of the Divine Promise and Government of the Twelfth Imam , and told them that waiting for the Great Savior is the most valuable deed , and that his followers and devotees are . the best and the beloved people

PART ۲

: It will suffice here to quote , as an example , a few of these traditions

When Imam Hasan al�Mujtaba (a . s .) held the seat of the caliphate , he fought the ۱ hypocritical Moaawya , who , with the assistance of his cunning minister , gradually deceived the companions of Imam Hasan (a . s .) , who thus

deserted and left the Imam alone . Hence , he was compelled to make a peace treaty with Moaawya in which he (Moaawya) was obliged to comply with some duties and to refrain from appointing a successor and fighting . On some occasions , the Imam took the opportunity to point out to the people Moaawya�s errors and unjust acts . Meanwhile , some of ignorant people started criticizing the Imam as to why he had accepted the peace treaty ! Imam Hasan (a . s .) clarified for the people the meaning of the Imam and the leader , and the necessity of obeying every command of the Imam without asking why and wherefore . Then he explained to them about the :Government of the Twelfth Imam , saying

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Don�t you know that every one of us (Imams) has the responsibility of taking� allegiance from the oppressors of his time , except the Support (al�Qaaim) behind whom the Spirit of Allah (Jesus) will pray; and Almighty Allah will keep secret his birth .from some people and will conceal his person from their sights

When he appears he will not be responsible for taking allegiance from anyone . He is the ninth descendant of my brother Hosayn , the son of the captive princess . Almighty Allah will prolong his age during his occultation , and by His Perfect Power , he will appear as a young man of less than forty years so that all people will know that Allah [truly has power over all things . �[۵

Imam Ja�far as�Sadiq (a . s .) in reply to a question from one of his followers . ۲ : about his successors , said

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The Imam succeeding me is my son Musa , and the Awaited Imam is Mohammed� [bin Hasan bin Ali bin Mohammed bin Ali bin Musa . �[۶

: The same Imam is quoted as having said repeatedly that

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Every group of people is waiting for a government , and we are waiting for our� [Government to be established at the End of Time . �[۷

The Seventh Holy Imam Musa bin Ja�far (a . s .) in a reply to one of his companions ۳ who asked him whether he was �al�Qaaim bil�Haqq� (he who is supported by : the Truth) , said

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I am Qaaim bil�Haqq , but that al�Qaaim who will remove Allah�s enemies from� the earth and will fill it with justice and equity is my fifth descendant . Since he will fear for his own life , he will be in occultation for a long time during which a group of people will apostate , but there will also be a group who will be firm in their belief�Blessed are our followers (the Shiites) who , during the time of the occultation (Ghayba) of the Imam of the Age , identify themselves with our Authority (wilaya) and keep away from our enemies . They belong to us and we belong to them . They have accepted our leadership and we are pleased with their adherence . Therefore , blessed are they . I swear to Allah that they will be with us in our rank in Paradise� . [۸]

۴) Finally , the Eleventh Imam Hasan al�Askari (a . s .) said :

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I see that after me differences will appear among you concerning the Imam after� me . Whoever accepts the Imams after the Prophet of Allah but denies my son is like a person who accepts all the prophets but denies the prophethood of Mohammed (s . a . w .) , the Prophet of Allah . And whoever denies (Mohammed) the Prophet of Allah is like one who has denied all the prophets of Allah , for to obey the last of us is like obeying the first and to deny the last of US is like denying the first . But beware ! Verily , for my son there will be an occultation during which all people will fall into doubt [except those whom Allah protects . �[۹

The available traditions from the Holy Prophet and the infallible Imams are so many in number as to make us well�informed on this important principle of faith . One can say that the most important , and the highest recorded number , of traditions is on the subject of Imamology (Imamate) in the Shiite books of traditions .

The subject of the leadership of the Twelfth Imam , his Government , and other related matters , comes next to the subject of the successorship of Imam Ali , Ameer al�Momineen (a . s .) . There are hundreds of these traditions recorded both in the Shiite and Sunnite books .

A large number of religious scholars from all Islamic sects have independently [۱۰] compiled books on this subject . [۱۱] Their number runs to tens of volumes .

The years of Imams , Islamic leadership passed one after another along with tyranny of the rulers contemporary with them , till the leadership of Imam Hasan al�Askari (a . s .) came . This Holy Imam lived in a difficult circumstances , appearing less frequently in the public gatherings . His beloved son who is the last Divine Proof , was hidden from the sight of strangers till the year ۲۶۰ A . H . , when the rays of his being set while the eyes of all people were fixed at the door of Imam al�Mahdi (a . s .) .

THE BIRTH

At dawn , on the ۱۵th Sha�ban ۲۵۵ A . H . , the rays of the illuminating world shone with a powerful shaft of light into a human form which became the source of existence for the universe .

Yes , finally , the Divine Promise was fulfilled and Imam al�Mahdi (a . s .) was born in spite of the efforts of those who denied him .

It is one of history�s miracles that the Omayyids , Abbasides and other opponents of this Holy Imam attempted to extinguish this divine light but met with complete failure .

The cruel and tyrannical caliphs of the Bani Abbas had heard that the Twelfth Imam of the Shiites would establish a just Government and would rule

over the east and west of the world , and would destroy the foundations of injustice . Therefore , to counter this event , they tortured and shed the blood of the Shiites as much as they could . The conditions of the martyred Shiites can be referred in the [books on this subject . [۱۲

In the year ۲۳۵ A . H . , Mutawakkil , the Abbasid caliph , ordered the Tenth Imam Mohammed al�Hadi (a . s .) and his family to be shifted from Medina to Samarra – his seat of government – so that he could keep a close watch on the Imam of the Shiites . [[۱۳

Similarly , Mu�tamid the Abbasid caliph , the Pharaoh of the time , was afraid of the son of Imam Hasan al�Askari (a . s .) . He formed a group of detectives and midwives who had the mission of frequently searching through the houses of the Alawiyyin , and especially the house of Imam Hasan al�Askari (a . s .) , so that if a newly�born [child were found , he could be killed immediately . [۱۴

The search to find and kill Imam al�Mahdi (a . s .) was intensified when Imam Hasan al�Askari (a . s .) left this world for the eternal one . This is because everyone knew that on that day the command of Divine Leadership (Imamate) was to be entrusted to the Twelfth Imam , and the universe would come under his authority

Shaykh Sadooq , the eminent scholar of the Shiite world , writes in Kamaloddeen (vol . i , p . ١٠١) :

When the holy body of Imam Hasan al�Askari (a . s .) was buried and the people� went away , the caliph and his comrades started their efforts to search for his growing son and inspected the houses carefully . �

Shaykh Mofeed , a distinguished Shiite scholar , also wrote in Irshad :

When Imam Hasan al�Askari (a . s .) passed away , the caliph of that time ,� pursued his son . because the Shiite Imamyya�s belief was famous and was spread about that the Shiites were awaiting His Eminence . [١٥]

Mu�tadid , one of the tyrant Abbasid caliphs who ruled from ٢٧٩ to ٢٨٩ A . H . , decided all at once to destroy the entire family of al�Askari when he heard that more than twenty years had passed since the birth of the son of Imam Hasan Askari (a . s .) and that he was still living in spite of the attempts of the preceding caliph to kill him .

One of Mu�tadid�s officers said :

Mu�tadid has ordered me and two other persons , each of us to mount a horse� and to proceed to Samarra in full speed without even stopping for prayer . He gave us the address of (Imam) al�Askari and instructed us to enter his house without his permission and to bring him the head of whoever we find there . �

As a matter of fact , they were unaware that the same power which had protected the Imam from the former caliphs would give him protection from his evil , because :

Allah disdains (nothing) save that He shall perfect His light , however much the disbelievers are averse . (Quran , ۹ : ۳۲)

Indeed what an immature thought and foolish act it was ! If the Divine Will bears on some matter , can a person revolt against it and combat it ? ! Is it possible that definite Divine Promises may not be compiled with ? ! Or is it possible that the reins of oppressive impostors who fight against the Divine decree will not cut ? !

Is it not more amazing that Peerless , Almighty Allah has shown His power many times before , so that after that all men should know that if He wishes to give His chosen servant government and sovereignty and to destroy infidelity and irreligiousness through him , then there is no one who can disrupt His rule .

Fortunately , this sensational story is mentioned in the Holy Quran : Pharaoh , the great emperor of Egypt , who had great power and pride , claimed the divinity for himself . He determined to kill all the youths and boy children of Bani Isra�il as a result of what he had heard about a son being born who would destroy his empire and divinity .

He shed the blood of innocents , and banished many persons to unknown regions;

but see how Almighty Allah restored His Prophet and how the Divine Will worked to protect the life of Mosa (Moses (a . s .)) and destroy Pharaoh :

And We revealed to Musa's mother saying : Give him suck . Then when you fear for� him , cast him into the river and do not fear nor grieve . Surely We will bring him back to you and make him one of the apostles . And Firon's family took him up that he might be an enemy and a grief for them . Surely Firon and Haman and their hosts were wrong-doers� � So We gave him back to his mother that her eye might be refreshed , and that she might not grieve , and that she might know that the promise of Allah is true , but most of them do not know (Quran , ۲۸ : ۷�۱۳)

Yes , Allah will protect His Proof (Hojjah) and will fulfill His promises and glad tidings because His decision is based on its execution , although most people do not know it .

Would Allah wish to save the life of Prophet Musa (a . s .) , who was only a messenger to a certain nation and tribe , and yield the Imam of the Age (Imam�e�Zaman) into the hands of Mu�tamid and Mu�tadid ?

Would Allah protect the life of Musa (a . s .) while he was in the middle of the roaring waves of a river , and give no security

to the Imam of the Age who was in the house of his father , Imam Hasan al�Askari (a ?(. . s

Would the Sustaining Allah protect Prophet Ibraheem (Abraham (a . s .)) in the middle of the flaming fire , but allow the Last Pearl of the Prophet�s progeny to be a victim ? of the lust and anger of the Abbasid caliphs

(We said : O fire ! be a comfort and peace to Ibraheem� (Quran , ٢١ : ٦٩�

? Really , how do false thinkers and feeble�minded people judge

At dawn , on the middle day of Sha�ban in the year ٢٥٥ A . H . , Imam Hasan al�Askari (a . s .) beheld the heavenly , shinning face of his son who was to fulfill all Divine promises and glad tidings . Not more than three days had passed after his birth : when the Eleventh Imam took the holy child to his companions and told them

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After me this will be your master of authority and my successor , and he is the� Support (al�Qaaim) for whose appearance all people will wait; when the earth is full [of injustice and tyranny , he will fill it with peace and justice . �[١٧

: [At the time of his son�s birth , the Eleventh Imam told some of his companions[١٨

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Oppressors were plotting to kill me so that my son would not be born , but now see� � . how great is the power of the All�powerful

Imam Hasan al�Askari (a . s .) , ordered ten thousand pounds (١٠ , ٠٠٠lbs .) of bread and meat to be distributed among Banu Hashim to mark the happy and auspicious birthday . Othman bin Sa�id was charged with this important work which he [undertook in the best way . [١٩

. From the very beginning , Imam Hasan al�Askari (a . s .) hid his son from strangers

. Read carefully these words of Shaykh Mofeed , part of which was quoted above

Imam Hasan al�Askari (a . s .) prepared a true Government for his fruitful son . He� kept secret the birth of his son and other related matters , because His Eminence was living in a difficult time when the caliphs were intensively searching for his son and were keeping a close eye on the affairs of Imam al�Askari . This is because the Shiite Imamyya belief about the Imam al�Mahdi (a . s .) had become so current that they were waiting for His Eminence . Hence , Imam Hasan al�Askari (a . s .) did not show his son , and , therefore , the enemies could not recognize Imam al�Mahdi (a . s .) [after the demise of His Eminence (father) . [٢٠

(. Although the affairs of Imam al�Mahdi (a . s

were unknown to his enemies and opponents , the sincere Shiites gathered the news . of this important event

Some of them were informed by Imam al�Askari (a . s .) through a letter . One of the sincere Shiites , Ahmad bin Ishaaq , received a letter from the Imam written in his own : hand writing , saying

A son is born to me . Therefore , keep secret the news of it from people and inform� [only his near relatives and particular friends . �[۲۱

Some of the Shiites used to pay private visits to Imam al�Askari (a . s .) who would take them into the presence of the Twelfth Imam al�Mahdi (a . s .) who would guide : them . Abo Omari and Ahwazi reported

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Abo Mohammed (Imam Hasan al�Askari �a . s .) showed me his son (the Twelfth � [Imam) and told me , This is your Master (sahib) . �[۲۲

Some other Shiites used to visit Imam al�Askari (a . s .) in a group , and if the Imam trusted in them that they would faithfully keep their visit secret , he would show them . his beloved son

Moaawya bin Hakim , Mohammed bin Ayyub and Mohammed bin Othman Omari have : narrated that

We were forty persons who gathered at the house of Imam Hasan , then His� Eminence showed us his son and said to us . This is your Imam and my successor . You

[should obey him after me and should not oppose him lest you perish . �[۲۳

Anyhow , from the time of the birth of the Twelfth �moon� till his Imamate , the Shiites used to go to the Eleventh Imam and congratulate him . Hasan bin Hasan al�Alawi said:

I went to see Imam Hasan (al�Askari) in Samarra and congratulated him on the� birth of his son . [۲۴]

And Abdullah bin Abbas al�Alawi also said:

I visited Imam al�Askari (a . s .) in Samarra and congratulated him on the birth of� his son�[۲۵]

Yes , in this manner was the Imam of the Age (Imam�e�Zaman) born and kept hidden from the reach of strangers . On some occasions only were virtuous Shiites allowed to see him , until the year ۲۶۰ A . H . , when the Eleventh Imam expired , and by Divine decree the office of Divine Leadership (Imamate) was vested in the Master of the Authority (Sahibol�Amr).

The Minor Occultation

the minor occultation

When Imam Hasan al�Askari (a . s .) died , the office of Divine Leadership (Imamate) was transferred to the Last Luminous Pearl of the Household of the Holy Prophet , Imam al�Mahdi (a . s .) . Although His Eminence did not appear amongst the people , some persons in whom he had trust and confidence were allowed to visit him and present him the problems and questions of the Shiites . And they communicated to the people the guidance and commands of the Divine Luminous Light.

From the point

of view , faith , confidence and virtue , these were distinguished persons among the .Muslims who were mediators between the Imam and the people

And in due time they conveyed the guidance of His Eminence to the people . By studying the degree of the character and perception of the belief and piety of these individuals , not only does the greatness of their personalities become clear to us , but we become more familiar with the Imam of the Age , because , among the sayings of these distinguished , trustworthy and reliable companions of the Holy Imams , one .(.finds the signs of the greatness of His Eminence (Imam al�Mahdi �a . s

Among the companions of Imam�e�Zaman , four became his most famous and confidential deputies who acted as mediators between the Imam and the people , and they are known as the an�Nowwab�e�Arba�a (the four deputies) . In order to know more about the dignity and greatness of their positions , we give below a brief :[description of each one of them[۲۶

:Othman bin Sa�id Omari ۱

This honorable figure was not only a deputy (naib) of Imam�e�Zaman but he was also a representative (wakil) of Imam Hasan al�Askari (a . s .) and Imam Ali an�Naqi (a . s .) . He settled and organized many affairs of the Shiites . The Tenth Imam :(al�Hadi �a . s .) said to his followers regarding him

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This Abo Omar is a reliable and trustworthy person . Whatever he says to you he� [says so on my behalf , and whatever he does he does on my behalf . �[٢٧

This representation continued till ٢٥۴ A . H . when Imam al�Hadi (a . s .) died . Then , the Eleventh Imam is reported to have praised the character of Abo Omari as having : his high esteem in his address to his Shiites , saying

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This Abo Omari is a reliable and trustworthy person . He had the confidence of the� preceding Imam , and has also my confidence in my lifetime and after my death . Whatever he says to you , he says so on my behalf , and what ever he does he does [on my behalf . [٢٨

Likewise , with this certificate of admiration , he became the deputy (Naibol�Imam) . (. of the Twelfth Imam after the demise of Imam Hasan al�Askari (a . s

On the death of Abo Omari , the Lord of the Age (Sahiboz�Zaman) himself sent : condolences to his son , Mohammed bin Othman saying

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Verily , we belong to Allah and verily to Him shall we return . We submit to His� command and are pleased with His decree . Your father has lived in good fortune and has died with dignity . May Allah�s mercy be upon him , he has joined his friends and masters . He was always endeavoring to search for whatever would bring him near to [Allah and His friends . May Allah make strengthen his countenance . �[۲۹

Abo Ja�far Mohammed bin Othman ۲

He was the second special deputy of Imam�e�Zaman and the deputy of the : Eleventh Imam , about whom the latter said

The greatness of his dignity and the exaltation of his status among the Shiites is� [famous that there is no need to explain or dispute it�[۳۰

Regarding him and his father , Othman bin Sa�id , Imam Hasan al�Askari (a . s .) : said to one of his companions

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Omar and his son are both trustworthy . Whatever they do , they do on my behalf ,� and whatever they say to you , they say so on my behalf . Therefore , listen to their words and obey them , because both of them are reliable and trustworthy to us . [�[۳۱

: And Imam�e�Zaman himself said about him

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[He is my confident , and his letter is of the same status as mine . �[۳۲�

Abol�Qasim Hosayn bin Ruh Nawbakhti ۳

Abo Ja�far Mohammed bin Othman , the third deputy of Imam�e�Zaman , said :about him

This Hosayn bin Ruh bin Abo Bahr Nawbakhti is my successor . He is a reliable and trustworthy envoy and deputy between you and the Sahibol�Amr (the Master of the Authority) . Therefore , in your affairs and important tasks refer to him and trust him . [I was given this task; and I have announced it . �[۳۳

Shaykh Toosi (Allah�s mercy be upon him) said about him

Abol�Qasim Hosayn bin Ruh was regarded by his friends and opponents as the� : [most learned man among the people . �[۳۴

The integrity of Hosayn bin Ruh�s deputyship was acknowledged by his opponents too . Shalmghani , who was one of the pseudo claimants to the deputyship , had to confess his falsity when Imam�e�Zaman ordered Hosayn bin Ruh to expose him . : He (Shalmghani) said

It is not right between me and Allah to say anything in the affair of Hosayn bin Ruh� other than the truth . Although his crime towards me is a big one , yet this man was appointed by Imam�e�Zaman for the task . The Shiites should not turn away from [him� . [۳۵

Abol�Hasan Ali bin Mohammed Saimari (۴

This honorable figure was the last special deputy (Naibol�khass) of the Holy Imam�e�Zaman . His death , coincided with the ۱۵th of Sha�ban ۳۲۹ A . H Hosayn bin Ruh introduced him as the deputy of the Imam . The last letter of Imam�e�Zaman (the Lord of the Age) to the four special deputies was addressed to this honorable man . In this order the Imam announced the death of Ali bin : Mohammed and the end of the deputation

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In the name of Allah , the Beneficent , the Merciful . You are going to die in six days ,� may Allah grant patience to your brothers in faith on your departure . So , be prepared , but appoint no one in your place , because from the day of your death the period of my major occultation (al�Ghaybatol�Kobra) will begin . Henceforth , no one will see me , unless and until Allah makes me appear . My reappearance will take place after a very long time when people will have grown tired of waiting and those who are weak in their faith will say : �What ! Is he still alive ? � When will men become cruel and inconsiderate , and the world will be full of injustice and violence . Very soon some men will claim to have seen me . Beware ! Anyone who makes such a claim before the coming out of Sufyani and the sound from heaven announcing my reappearance , is a liar and an impostor . There is no might nor strength except in Allah , the Magnificent . [�[۳۶

As can be seen from this , it is the last order , in which the door of special deputation is closed by the death of Ali bin Mohammed; hence , any one who

claims to be a mediator , or claims that the Imam can be seen , is a liar . In the period of the major occultation no one has made the claim that he has been in the presence . of the Holy Imam�e�Zaman

The people would not accept the deputation of the four special deputies unless they had been shown the miracles of the Sahibol�Amr to verify their truthfulness and accuracy , although they acknowledged them as reliable and trustworthy and had not [the smallest doubt in their piety , faith and knowledge . [۳۷

The special deputies presented to Imam�e�Zaman the problems and questions of the Shiite scholars , and he answered the ones that were necessary in letter form and . delivered them through the same deputies

In these letters , the most important and difficult problems on different subjects of . Shiite beliefs were cleared up

One of these problems was a question as to what would be the responsibility of the Shiites who would be faced with new events during the period of occultation , and ? what should they do to face them

In the letter issued by Imam�e�Zaman to the celebrated and distinguished Shiite Ishaaq bin Yaqoob he recounted duties , methods and guidance for the Shiites in the period of occultation . This direction was carried out for many centuries , and it is one . of the proofs of the comprehensiveness and eternity of Islamic rule

In one of the letters to Imam�e�Zaman which he sent through the second special deputy of

the Imam , Ishaaq bin Yaqoob asked him some different questions , among which was a question which is the subject of our discussion . The Imam said that in those affairs one must refer to those who really understands their (Imams�) sayings and :have truly related them

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But as for the problems which will occur in the future , you should refer to the� narrators of our traditions for their verdicts as they are my proofs to you , and I am [Allah�s Proof (Hojjatollah) to them . �[۳۸

Other letters of His Eminence (Imam al�Mahdi �a . s .) were issued during the minor occultation (al�Ghaybatos�Sughra) , each one of them solved difficulties and gave instruction in the boundless sea of wisdom . All these letters were conveyed through .the Holy Imam�s special deputy to the desirous seekers

Yes , the four deputies , who were at the highest level of faith and confidence for many years , were the blessed mediators between the Imam and the people till in the year ۳۲۹ A . H . when this deputation was closed , and on the basis of the Divine Will the major occultation of Imam�e�Zaman commenced . This was the very occultation which was prophesied a long time previously by the Holy Prophet and the Shiites Imams; and Muslims keep patient in this period of test , till by the order of Almighty ,Allah

the Awaited Imam will appear and the Divine Aim will reach its fullfilment .

The Major Occultation

After the year ٣٢٩ A . H . , when the major occultation commenced , the special deputation of Imam�e�Zaman terminated . If anybody claims during the major occultation to be a mediator and a deputy , then , according to the declaration of Imam�e�Zaman himself , that claimer is a liar .

In the Holy Imams traditions , the purpose of the Imam�s going into occultation is compared to the sun being behind the clouds yet being a source of vitality and life for living creatures . Likewise , while the Imam is behind the curtain of occultation , he is still a source of the existence and remaining of the world .

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I asked Imam Jafar as�Sadiq (a . s .) : How will people benefit from the hidden � � Proof in the Occultation ? He replied : �They will derive benefit in the same manner as they derive benefit when the sun is behind clouds�[٣٩]

During the major occultation , many people have had meetings with His Eminence (Imam al�Mahdi �a . s .) , and have managed to meet him , but none of them have claimed to be able to see him or to represent him , because only the four special deputies (Nawwab al�khass) of the Imam had the honor of meeting with His

. Eminence whenever they wished

Some of the names of these fortunate persons who have had the honor of meeting [the Imam are mentioned in the authentic books . [۴۰

Among these personalities are : Allama Hilli - a famous scholar and a rhetorician of the Islamic world; Muqaddas Ardibili - the most pious person and most knowledgeable jurist of his time; Sayyid bin Tawoos - a pious and a virtuous narrator - ; Sayyid . Bahrol�Olum - a distinguished scholar; and other great and notable figures in Islam

Yes , they saw the �sun� (Imam) with their own eyes , and their hearts were filled with the faith of Imamol�Asr (the Imam of the Period) , and with sympathetic . explanations they informed others about their meeting with His Eminence

As an example , we can examine part of the will of Sayyid bin Tawoos which he wrote to his son in the year ۶۵۰ A . H . In his own words he explained to his son , implying the : truth of the matter without claiming to have perceived him

O my son ! If success in discovering the truth and mysteries has been granted to� you , then I will inform you regarding Imam al�Mahdi (a . s .) in such a way that you will never have any doubt , and you will not need intellectual proofs and recorded traditions; because His Eminence is certainly alive and exists , and as long as Merciful Allah does not allow him to plan events , he

is excused from revealing and declaring his workings . And this matter is not exclusively to him , but was usual among many prophets and their successors . Then you must know with confidence and consider it as your faith and creed . And know that the insight of your father into His Eminence is brighter than his knowledge of the [world . [۴۱

The honor of seeing Imam�e�Zaman was not exclusive to some special Shiite scholars only , but many devout and illiterate people have also had this honor . We are completely amazed when we see people who at one time used to commit sinful and indecent acts , but who after their repentance , and after having their hearts filled with love for Imam�e�Zaman , also had an opportunity to meet him , and among .them were also our Sunni brothers

One of the Sunni brothers was Hasan Iraqi who lived a life of immorality when he was young . One day , he suddenly awoke from the slumber of heedlessness and asked himself , �Was I created to commit these evil deeds ? � Then he left the immoral place he was in and went directly to the mosque . By chance , a preacher there was speaking about Imam al�Mahdi (a . s .) . Iraqi�s fully disturbed soul turned into a heart flaming with enthusiastic love of the Imam . Henceforth , he invoked Allah after (every prayer to give him the opportunity to see the Living Imam (Baqiyyatollah

Finally , his prayers were answered and for seven days and nights he learned the . . path of salvation in His Eminence�s presence

Thereafter , this man became known as one of the great scholars of Islam . Abdol�Wahhab Sha�rani , one of the great Sunni scholars , and the original relater [of this anecdote , used to call him by the title , �My great master Shaykh Iraqi . �[۴۲

During the major occultation , letters were issued by His Eminence to individuals and great scholars of Islam . In those letters new difficult problems were solved , and necessary guidance was given . Among these letters there was one issued in the year ۴۱۰ A . H . praising a distinguished scholar of Islam , Mohammed bin Mohammed bin . Nu�man , alias Shaykh Mofeed

Shaykh Mofeed has enjoyed a special rank for his knowledge and devoutness , and that letter was an acknowledgment of his efforts and worthy services . Even after the . passing of many centuries , people still admire him with honor and respect

The importance of this letter indicates the awareness of the Imam of the mistakes and immoral actions of some of the Shiites , and at the same time it gives hope in the : purpose of his existence

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We are well�informed of all your affairs and none of them is hidden from us . We� are aware of the problems which have occupied you from the time when you found pleasure and kept committing indecent deeds which your predecessors had avoided . We are aware from that time when your predecessors broke the covenant made with them , as if they knew not about it . We will not neglect or forget you lest calamity and troubles fall on you , and enemies have the opportunity to overpower you . Therefore [, remember Allah and fear him . �[۴۳

The valuable writings of Imam al�Mahdi (a . s .) during the major occultation are the most important guidance for his Shiites (followers) . These writings can be referred to [in the authentic Shiite books . [۴۴

However , we are now passing through a very sensitive period in the major .occultation

In Islamic traditions , when the subject of the occultation of the Twelfth Imam is discussed , reference is made to the complex nature of this Divine test . In this Divine test , the sincere and faithful Shiites are distinguished from others �and becomes as [pure as a pure gold . �[۴۵

In Islamic traditions , a comparison is drawn between the sincere faith of the Shiites .and the faith of a few followers of the Prophet Nuh (Noah�a . s

who remained faithful despite their very difficult test , and who , by boarding the ark , (with Prophet Nuh (a . s .) , were saved from the Deluge .

Therefore , blessed are those who have passed this Divine test; we hope to be among their rank .

The Shiites During The Imam�s Occultation

So now , what is a duty of a Shiite ?

What responsibilities does he have ?

Truly , are we reckoned among the real followers of His Eminence (Imam al�Mahdi �a . s .) ?

If we study the lives of the devout Shiites (followers) of the Holy Imams before the Twelfth Imam and consider their sacrifices without the slightest hesitation , we shall at once awake from our neglectful slumber and realize our weakness and guilt .

Were not Salman al�Farisi , Abo Zar al�Ghifari , Ammar bin Yasir and Malik al�Ashtar the followers of the contemporary Imam Ali , Ameer al�Momineen (a . s .) , and are we too the followers of the Imam of our Age ?

Was not Maytham at�Tammar , who did not cease to praise Ali , the Lord of the faithful , a follower of His Eminence Ali , and are we too , who are passing with the Imam of our Age through a strange period , the followers of His Eminence ?

Were not the martyrs of Karbala , who with love strove in the way of defending the Imam of their time , Hosayn (a . s .) , and were martyred , the followers

of His Eminence , and are we too , who refuse to give our wealth , lives and other ? means in the way of the Imam of our time , His Eminence�s followers

Is a person like Hisham bin Hakam , who in his extraordinary and valuable debates crushed and defamed the opponents of the Divine Leadership (Imamate) in such a way that he was called the �assistant of the Imam� by Imam as�Sadiq (a . s .) , a Shiite ? And are we too , who are sluggish in fulfilling our foremost duty to recognize ? the Imam of our time , Shiites

From what we read of the glad tidings in the Quran and the traditions of the Holy Prophet and the infallible Imams , the Imam of the Age (Imam�e�Zaman) has special responsibilities which other Imams did not have . Imam�e�Zaman will establish a Universal Government . He will fill the earth with righteousness and justice . He will exploit the earth�s treasures and natural resources . He will improve and develop the land , and in this way people�s awareness and understanding will [improve . [۴۶

Therefore , do not the followers of His Eminence have a very particular duty ? Should not the Shiites endeavor to obtain the competence and merit of being His ? Eminence�s special companions when he reappears by Divine Command

Therefore , let us see what our duties are and how we should observe them . Undoubtedly , our first duty is to become acquainted with him

Recognizing Imam�e�Zaman is so important and essential that in the Holy . : Prophet�s traditions we read

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He who dies without recognizing the Imam of his age is like one who had died� [during the jahiliyya (the pagan era before the advent of Islam) . [۴۷

To die during the jahiliyya means a death devoid of Islam and faith . And it is obvious that one who dies without recognizing the Imam of his age is counted in the group of . the faithless

In another tradition , Imam Mohammed al�Baqir (a . s .) is quoted as having said on : the same subject

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One who dies without having (accepted) the Imam , it is as if he died in the jahiliyya ,� [and people are not exempted from recognizing their Imam . �[۴۸

Therefore , we must endeavor to recognize His Eminence (Imam�e�Zaman) for the sake of Islam and our faith , and so that we may be reckoned among those who have . gained salvation and among the faithful

Another duty of the Shiites during the major occultation , which the Holy Imam have alluded to , is the question of being ready for the Savior . Hence , the first step for salvation is to recognize the Imam of the age; and the second step is to be prepared . for the establishment of just Government by His Eminence

One who is

waiting (muntazir) and preparing himself for the appearance of the Imam must have the characters and merits of the companions of Imam al�Mahdi (a . s .) , and should : sacrifice his life and wealth in his way . For this reason , Imam as�Sadiq (a . s .) said

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One who waits for our commands is like a person who sacrifices his own blood in the [way of Allah . [۴۹

Yes , he who is really ready for Imamol�Asr (the Imam of the period) becomes like a . martyr in the way of Allah

In another tradition , the same Imam told some of his followers about the person who : is really waiting for Imam�e�Zaman , saying

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One who dies while expecting the Government of al�Qaaim is like one who is in the� presence of al�Qaaim (Imam al�Mahdi (a . s .)) . After a pause he added : �But he is like one who has been struck with a sword while accompanying him . Then he insisted further by adding : �Nay , by Allah ! He is like one who has been martyred in [the presence of the Messenger of Allah�[۵۰

Are we reckoned among those who are expecting His Eminence ? Are we at least waiting for

the Divine Promise of the Authority of Allah (Waliyyollah) in the same way as we wait for the return of our loved ones from a journey ? In another tradition , Imam as�Sadiq (a . s .) narrated the virtues of the companions of Imam al�Mahdi (a . s .) :saying

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If one takes pleasure in being among the companions of al�Qaaim , then he must� wait for him and must act with good behavior and modestly . If he dies before the appearance of al�Qaaim , then he will be rewarded like one who has followed him . Then act diligently , and await , that this effort and awaiting will give you delight , O [you who have found salvation . �[٥١

So , one who is awaiting and has not ceased from good and worthy deeds should earnestly endeavor to be in an excellent and worthy position in such a way that Allah .may shower His blessings on him

So , we should pray to Allah that He may include us among those who are waiting for the Imam of the age , and that our acts and conduct may also symbolize the truth of our claim . Firstly , we should acquaint ourselves with His Eminence , the Imam , and then we

should guide others , his opponents and enemies . We should gain the virtues of the companions of Imam al�Mahdi (a . s .) , and should always be in the expectation of his appearance . Henceforth , we will be able to sacrifice our worthless souls and thus .to make them worthy

Shiites must have a devout link with His Eminence during the occultation . Their hearts and souls should be filled with love and affection for him . Their thoughts should be devoted to his service and their desire should be to meet him . Their prayers should be to ask for the blessing of Allah to be showered on His Eminence , and their supplication should be for salvation . Their existence should be one welded and fused .unit , and their life should blaze with love for him

Introduction

Al�Mahdi (the Guided One) , is not only a materialization of an Islamic belief of a spiritual nature , but a model to a particular goal which humanity has been striving to achieve , as well as a form to a natural inspiration , through which people came to realize – in spite of their different faith and means of access to the unseen – that there is an appointed day on earth , when the Divine messages will be fulfilled in all their great significance and final aim , when the exhausting march which humanity took in the course of history will lead to stability and security , after a

. long struggle

However , the awareness of this expected future is not limited to those who believe in the unseen from a religious angle , but it has extended to others and has even been reflected in those ideologies which strongly denied the existence of the unseen and any of its aspects , such as dialectical materialism , that interpreted history in terms of contradictions , but at last admitted the fact that there was an appointed time in which these contradictions would be resolved when peace and harmony would prevail on . earth

Thus we find that the psychological experience of this awareness , which humanity has undertaken in the course of time , is one of the widest and most commonly held . among people

So , if religion strengthens this awareness by reaffirming that at the end of matter , the earth will be filled with justice after having been filled with injustice and tyranny , it is in reality providing it with its objective value and turning it into a decisive belief in human destiny , which is not only a source of consolation but of generosity and . strength

It is a source of generosity , since belief in al�Mahdi is in reality belief in the protest . against all forms of oppression and tyranny although they still prevail in the world

It is also a source of strength and a refutation that cannot dwindle , since it is a ray of light that is continually struggling against despair within people and keeping the

flame of hope ablaze within their hearts in spite of the gloomy conditions and the might of oppression under which they live , because the appointed day confirms the fact that justice can challenge a world filled with transgression and tyranny , that it can shake its foundations , and rebuild it anew; that oppression is only an unnatural condition , regardless of its power and extent in the different corners of the world; that it will eventually be defeated; that the ultimate defeat of oppression while on the summit of its glory , brings great hope before every persecuted individual and every oppressed nation , in tipping the balance and rebuilding the world .

If the idea of al�Mahdi is older and wider than Islam , the detailed outlines , which the latter has fixed for it , have proved more satisfactory to all those ambitions that have been seeking its realization since the dawn of history as well as a more generous gift and a stronger prediction for the feelings of those who have been persecuted and oppressed in the course of history . This is because Islam has turned the idea from the unseen into reality , and from an aspiration for a savior the world would produce in the distant and unknown future into the conviction that he actually exists looking forward with other people to that day and the right circumstances that would make it possible for him to assume his great role .

Thus , al�Mahdi (peace be upon him) is

no longer an idea waiting to be materialized nor a prophecy that needs to be substantiated , but a living reality and a particular person , living among us in flesh and blood , who is sharing our hopes , suffering , sorrows and joys , actually witnessing all the sufferings , sadness and transgression that exist on the surface of the earth , who is affected with all this from near or far , who is waiting for the appropriate moment when he can stretch his hands to every oppressed and needy person and eradicate the tyrants . However , it has been decreed that this expected leader is not to reveal anything concerning his life or person to other people , although he is living amongst .them , waiting for the appointed moment

It is obvious that thinking in terms of these Islamic indications narrows the gap of the unseen between the oppressed people and the expected savior and reduces the psychological distance between him and them , no matter how long the expectation .may last

So , when we are supposed , as far as we are concerned , to consider the idea of al�Mahdi; as actually designating a particular living person who is observing events like we are , it is to inspire us with the fact that the idea of the unconditional protest against all sorts of transgression and tyranny , which al�Mahdi stands for , has already materialized in the expected dissident leader who will emerge , paying no

homage to the transgressors , as it has been mentioned in the hadith tradition) , and that by believing in him we are in reality believing in this unyielding and living protest and participating in it.

Indeed lots of ahadeeth (traditions) are constantly urging those who believe in al�Mahdi to expect release from suffering and be prepared for his coming , which is a consolidation of that spiritual bond and emotional tie between them and the dissident leader and every value he stands for both of which could not have existed had he not actually materialized as a contemporary living person.

Thus we come to realize that this materialization has given a new impetus to the idea and made it a source of strength and generosity of a higher degree in terms of what any dissident individual finds of comfort consolation and relief from the pains that he has to suffer under tyranny and deprivation , when he comes to feel that his Imam and leader shares them with him , since the latter is a contemporary person and not an idea to be realized in the future . However , the above mentioned materialization has led many people , who found it hard to believe or assume , to take negative attitudes even regarding the idea of al�Mahdi . Since they all wonder:

Is the idea of al�Mahdi actually designates a living person who has coexisted with all these consecutive generations for more than ten centuries , who will continue to do so until

? the time comes for him to emerge on the surface

How can such a human being live all this long and yet be immune from the laws of nature which compel any person to pass by the phase of old�age and decrepitude and from there to his death . Is not such a matter impossible from an existential point ? of view

Why should Allah show all this desire for this particular person – for whom the laws of nature would be obstructed – and endeavors to prolong his life and preserve him for ? the appointed day; has humanity become barren from yielding capable leaders

Why should not that day come when a leader will be born at its dawn and grow up like anyone else and gradually assume his role until the earth be filled with justice after ? having been filled with injustice and transgression

Is al�Mahdi is the name of a particular person , who is the son of the eleventh Imam of the family of the Prophet (Ahlol�Bayt – peace and blessing of Allah be upon them) , born in the year ۲۵۶A . H . whose father died in the year ۲۶۰A . H . This means that he was very young when his father died , not exceeding the age of five , which is too early for him to have completed his religious and intellectual education at the hands of his father . Therefore

How and by what means could he personally be prepared to assume that great role from religious

intellectual and scientific angles . Moreover , if the leader is ready , why should he , ? wait all these hundreds of years

Is not what the world has witnessed of afflictions and social disasters enough to ? justify his appearance on its surface for the establishing of justice on earth

How can we believe in his existence even if we were to assume that this could be ? possible

Can anybody admit the validity of a hypothesis of this kind when it is not actually ? supported by any conclusive legal or scientific evidence

Should some narratives (ahadeeth) related to the Prophet (blessing and peace of Allah be upon him and his progeny) , of which we doubt the authenticity be enough for ? us to approve such a hypothesis

As far as the role that this individual is going to play on the appointed day is concerned , they wonder how a single person can assume this great decisive role in the world , while we know that however great an individual is , he cannot create history nor lead it into a new phase; whereas the seeds of any historical movement ripen under certain objective circumstances and their coming together; and the sublimity of the individual is the factor which selects him to shape these objective circumstances and ? provide the required solutions

How we can imagine what this individual would achieve of enormous change and decisive victory for justice and its dosage against the realities of injustice , oppression and tyranny in spite of what they

have of power and influence and what they possess of means of destruction as well as what they have achieved of high standards in scientific , political , social and . military capabilities

Questions in this connection recur often in one form or another , however the true motives behind them are not only intellectual , since they have also a psychological source expressed in terms of the fear that dominates the world and the meagerness of all opportunity of change from the roots Therefore , doubts deepen and questions increase , the more one becomes aware of the harsh reality that has prevailed in the world in the course of time . Thus failure , meagerness and the weakness that the human being is subject to lead him to feel under a psychological pressure whenever he attempts to imagine the tremendous change of the world which would relieve it of its contradictions and historical oppression and would provide it with a new structure based on justice and truth . This pressure makes the individual doubt the whole . concept of change and leads him to refuse it for one reason or another

As far as we are concerned , we are going to deal with all these questions in sequence . answering each one briefly due to the limits provided by these pages

? How Was Long Life Granted To Al�Mahdi

PART ١

Is it possible for a man to live for many centuries , as is the case with the Expected Leader , for the change of the world , whose age must be actually

one thousand one hundred and forty years , or fourteen times the average age of an ordinary person who would pass through the phases of life from childhood to old age ? normally

The word possibility here has one of the three following meanings , namely : Practical . possibility , scientific possibility and philosophical or logical possibility

By practical possibility , I mean that a task is feasible in a manner that enables me , you or a third person to perform it , such as taking a journey across the ocean , reaching the depth of the sea or going to the moon , all of which are practically . possible since they have actually been performed by people in one way or another

By scientific possibility , I mean that there are some tasks that neither I nor you nor a third person can practically perform with the means that are accessible to present civilization . However there is nothing in the alterable trends of science which can indicate a justification for the rejection of the possibility of these tasks and their . occurrence conforming to certain special circumstances and means

For example , there is nothing in science that could deny the possibility of traveling to Venus , because all its existing trends indicate the possibility of such a task , although that is still not possible for me or you since the difference between going to the moon and traveling to Venus is only one of degree . The latter representing a stage of

overcoming some relative difficulties stemming from the fact that the distance is longer . From this we deduce that it is scientifically possible to travel to Venus even if it is still not feasible from a practical angle .

Contrary to that is the idea of traveling to the sun in distant space since it is scientifically impossible , meaning that science would never entertain the possibility of this task , for one cannot assume scientifically or empirically the possibility of inventing that preventive armor that could protect the body against the heat of the sun which is like an enormous kiln constantly burning with a degree impossible to imagine .

By logical or philosophical possibility , I mean that there is nothing in the intellect , conforming to what it knows of previous laws – (preceding the experiment) – that could justify the rejection of a task nor decide that it could not occur .

Say , for example , the grouping of three oranges into two equal parts , this is logically impossible , since the intellect knows – before carrying out such an experiment – that three is an odd number , thus it is impossible to divide it into two equal parts , first it would turn into an even number , which would be a contradiction , which is impossible in logic .

But if a man were to be exposed to fire , or if he were to go to the sun without burning , that would not be impossible from a logical

point of view , since there is no contradiction in the assumption that heat does not . penetrate into a body of lower temperature from one of higher temperature

That would only run contrary to the experiment which proved that heat actually penetrates into a body of lower temperature from one of higher temperature until both bodies get an equal temperature . Therefore , we come to realize that logical possibility has a wider scope than scientific possibility and that the latter is wider than . practical possibility

There is no doubt about the logical possibility of the prolongation of human life for some thousands of years , because that is not impossible from an abstract intellectual point of view , also there is no contradiction in an assumption of this sort , since life – . as it is understood – does not fathom sudden death and no one can dispute this fact

Also , there is no doubt or controversy that this prolonged life is not possible from the practical aspect , as is the case in going down to the depths of the ocean or ascending to the moon . That is because science with what it owns of modern means and instruments , that were made available by concomitant human experiments , cannot prolong human life for hundreds of years , this is why we find that even those among people who are more eager about life and more able to utilize scientific possibilities can only live to the extent of what is usual

.

As far as scientific possibility is concerned , there is nothing in science , nowadays which could justify the denial of that fact from a theoretical point of view . This inquiry is in reality related to the nature of the physiological interpretation of the . phenomenon of old�age and decrepitude among people

Does this phenomenon indicate a natural law that compels the tissues of the human body and its cells to harden gradually and become less efficient in the performance of their task once they have reached the summit of their growth , until they die at a particular moment , even if we were to isolate them from the influence of some ? external failure

Or is this hardening of the bodily tissues and cells and the lack of efficiency in the performance of their physiological tasks a result of their struggle against certain external factors , such as microbes or poison that penetrate the body from an excess ? in food or from the heavy work that the person might perform or any other factor

Now this is the question that science has to find an answer to , yet many answers . present themselves on a scientific level in this respect

If we are to consider the scientific point of view that tends to interpret old�age and the weakness that goes with it , as a result of reactions against some external factors , it means that it is theoretically possible , once we have isolated the tissues that compose the body from these influences

to prolong life to the extent of surpassing the phenomenon of old�age and even , overcoming it .

On the other hand , if we consider the other point of view which sees old�age as a natural process with regards to the living tissues and cells , it will mean that they bear within themselves the seed of their own ultimate death , once the phase of old�age has been completed .

PART ٢

I say : If we take this point of view into consideration it should not mean that there is no flexibility in this natural law , rather the assumption of its existence shows that it is in fact flexible , since we find in our everyday life , in addition to what has been found by scientists through the experiments that they carry out in their laboratories , that old�age as a physiological phenomenon has no fixed time , since a man can be very old and yet possess tender limbs , with no trace of old�age appearing on him as has been mentioned by some doctors . Moreover some scientists take advantage of this flexibility and prolong the life of some animals by a hundred times their natural age , by creating certain circumstances and factors that delay the process of old�age .

Thus it has been proved scientifically that this process can be postponed , by creating specific circumstances and factors , even if this experiment has not been carried out by science on a particular complicated creature such as the human being

owing to the difference in the difficulty of carrying it out on the human being and , other organisms.

This means that , from a theoretical point of view , science , with all its alterable orientations , has never had any objection to the prolongation of human life , whether old�age has been interpreted as the product of a struggle and close contact with some external influences , or as a result of a natural process of the cells and tissues that leads them towards their death.

Thus we deduce that the prolongation of human life and its survival over many centuries is possible logically as well as scientifically but it is still impossible from a practical angle , and that nevertheless scientific progress has a long way to go before realizing this possibility.

In light of what has been discussed we shall deal with the age of al�Mahdi (peace be upon him) and what has been surrounding it of wonder and surprise.

Thus we notice that since the possibility of this prolonged life has been confirmed both logically and scientifically , science is in the process of gradually transforming the theoretical possibility into a practical one . There is no room left for wonder except the remoteness of the probability that al�Mahdi might have preceded science in this transformation , before that the latter could have , in its evolutionary course , reached the standard of actual capacity for such a transformation , which would make him equal to that person who had

. preceded science in discovering the cure for cancer

How could Islam – which determined the age of the Expected Leader – have preceded !? science in the field of this transformation

This is not the only field in which Islam preceded science . Has the Islamic shari�ah (revealed law) as a whole not come before science and the evolution of human thought by many centuries ?! Did it not promulgate certain symbols that submitted plans to be put into practice , which man could achieve only after hundreds of years of his independent activity ?! Did it not formulate certain regulations perfect in wisdom , the secrets of which were realized by man only after a certain length of time ?! Did the Divine message not reveal mysteries about the universe , that could never have !? occurred to people�s minds , which science came later to confirm and support

So , if we are convinced by these facts , why then should we regard as too much that the sender of this message – the Exalted – anticipates science in determining the age !? of al�Mahdi

Here I mentioned only those aspects of precedence that we can notice in a direct manner , we can also include the aspects of precedence mentioned in the Divine message , for example , when it informs us about the night journey which the Prophet undertook from al�Haram Mosque to al�Aqsa Mosque . If we are to understand this journey within the frame of natural

laws , we will find that it shows that these laws were utilized in a way that science could achieve only after hundreds of years.

Therefore , the same Divine knowledge which enabled the Messenger (peace and blessing of Allah be upon him and his progeny) to undertake this fast motion before science could achieve it , has also enabled his designated successors to have a prolonged life before science could realize such a project.

Certainly , this prolonged age that Allah , the Exalted , has bestowed on the Expected Savior may seem rather strange , if it is considered within the limits of the everyday in people�s lives and what has been achieved by the experiments of scientists.

But is the decisive and transformative role which has been prepared for this Savior not strange within the limits of the ordinary in people�s lives and what they have experienced of historical evolution ?! Has he not been entrusted with the task of changing the world and rebuilding its civilization on the basis of justice and truth ?! Why should we disapprove if the preparation of this great role is characterized by strange and unusual aspects , such as the prolongation of the Expected Leader�s age ?!

For this remoteness of those aspects and their unusual aspects , however great they are , cannot surpass the remoteness of the great role that has to be achieved on the appointed day . Therefore , if we approve the validity of that unique role from

a historical angle in spite of the fact that there has never been in the history of humanity a role similar to it , why should not we also approve that prolonged age !? which is still unique in our ordinary life

I wonder if it is a coincidence that only two individuals should carry out the task of emptying human civilization of its corrupt elements and rebuilding it , which means that they must have been of an excessive age many times superior to our ordinary lives . The first is Nuh (Noah) who had assumed his role in the humanity�s past . The Quran mentioned that he had lived among his people for nine hundred and fifty years .. His role was to reconstruct the world after the Great Flood

And certainly We send Nuh to his people , so he remained among them a thousand� years save fifty years . And the deluge overtook them , while they were unjust� ((Quran ٢٩ : ١٥

The other one is al�Mahdi , who is to assume his role in the future , who has lived among his people until now for more than a thousand years . It has been ordained .that he will reconstruct the world on the appointed day

Why then should we accept Noah , who must have reached a thousand years at least , !? and yet reject al�Mahdi

The Miracle And The Long Life

Up to now we have seen that the prolongation of life is scientifically possible . But let us suppose that it

is not , that the process of old�age and decrepitude is quite rigid , that it cannot either now or in the long run overcome nor alter its conditions or circumstances – ? what will this mean

It will mean that the prolongation of human life – as is the case of Noah , or al�Mahdi – runs contrary to the natural laws which science confirmed thanks to modern instruments of experimentation . Thus this condition becomes a miracle that has hindered the applicability of a natural law under a certain circumstances , in order to . preserve the life of a particular individual whose role is to cherish the Divine message

Yet this is not the only miracle of its kind , nor is it remote from a Muslim�s faith , which derives from the Quran and the sunnah . Moreover the process of old�age is no more rigid than is the process of the passage of heat from a body of higher temperature to another of lower temperature until both of them become equal . This had occurred in the case of Ibraheem (peace be upon him) when the only way to preserve his life was by hindering that process , when it was said to the fire in which : he was thrown

(We said : O fire ! be a comfort and peace to Ibraheem� (Quran , ٢١ : ۶٩�

So , he emerged from it safe and unharmed . There . are also other cases where natural laws were hindered to protect some of

the prophets or Proofs of Allah on earth . When the sea was split for Musa (Moses) , when the Romans were misled in thinking they had caught Isa (Jesus) or when Mohammed (peace and blessing of Allah be upon him and his progeny) left his house , while it was surrounded by the troops of Quraysh who were waiting for hours to attack him but Allah , the Exited , hid him from their eyes while he was walking in their midst . All of these cases show a hindrance of the laws of nature to protect an individual , whom the Divine wisdom wished to preserve . Therefore , why not include !? here the process of old�age and decrepitude

From this we can deduce a general notion , which is that whenever the preservation of the Prophet�s life (the Proof of Allah on earth) depends on the hindrance of a natural law , and the prolongation of his life comes to be necessary for the performance of his task , Divine care then intervenes by delaying the process so that the task of that individual can be accomplished . On the other hand , once the Divine mission of that individual has been fulfilled , he either dies naturally or as a martyr .depending on what is determined by natural laws

Thus we find ourselves confronted with the present question in connection with this :general notion

? How can the process be obstructed

How can the necessary correlation that exists between natural phenomena

? be sundered ,

Does it not contradict science , which discovered the existence of that natural law or process and defined that necessary correlation on experimental and deductive bases ?

Science has already solved the problem by giving up the idea of necessity as far as natural laws are concerned . To clarify this we can say that science discovers natural laws through systematic observations and experiments . For example , when the occurrence of a natural phenomenon is followed by another one , we deduce from this a natural law that whenever the first phenomenon comes into existence it is . automatically followed by another phenomenon

However , science does not propose a necessary correlation between the two phenomena stemming from their nature , since necessity is an invisible condition that experimentation and the instruments of scientific and inductive inquiry cannot demonstrate . Therefore , the logic of modern science emphasizes that natural law - as it is defined by science - does not indicate a necessary correlation , but an uninterrupted connection , between two phenomena . But when the miracle occurs and separates one from the other , it does not mean that their correlation was . sundered

The truth of the matter is that the miracle , in its religious sense , has become , in the light of modern scientific logic , more understandable than before , under the classical view of causal correlation . This old view assumed that every two phenomena , in which one is followed automatically by the other

must have a necessary correlation , which means that it is impossible to separate one from the other . However , this correlation has been transformed thanks to modern scientific logic into a law of correlation or of consecutive succession between two phenomena without the hypothesis of invisible necessity.

Thereby the miracle becomes an exceptional condition with regard to this connective succession without running against a necessity or leading to an impossibility.

So , in the light of the logical foundation of induction we agree with the modern point of view which says that induction does not demonstrate the existence of a necessary correlation between two phenomena . We find that it shows that there is a common interpretation for the consecutive connection between the two . Since this common interpretation can be formed on the basis of the assumption of subjective necessity , it can also be formed on the assumption of a wisdom that made the Creator of the universe to continuously combine some particular phenomena with others . The same wisdom sometimes calls for exception; thus a miracle occurs.

Why All This Desire To Prolong His Life

Why should Allah , the Exalted , show all this desire for this person in particular?

Why should the natural laws be hindered just to prolong his life?

Why should the leadership of the appointed day not be left to a person born in the future , who will appear then and assume his expected role ? In other words : What is the use of this long absence and what is

? the motive behind it

Indeed many people ask these questions , yet at the same time none of them is prepared to accept the Divine answer for them . However we believe that the twelve Imams form a unique group of individuals , none of whom could be substituted . But these people require a social interpretation of the situation , in the light of tangible realities , for the great operation of change and the understandable requirements for . the appointed day

On these bases , we will temporarily disregard the characteristics that we believe : should be fulfilled in the infallible Imams and ask the following questions

As far as the expected operation of change , of the appointed day , is concerned and as far as it is understandable in the light of the norms and the experiences of life , can we consider the prolonged age of its preserved leader as one of the factors for its ? success , and of his ability to lead it in a better way

We can give an affirmative answer to this question because of many reasons among : which are the following

First , that the great operation of change requires from its leader a unique psychological attitude , filled with a sense of success and a sense of the insignificance of the mighty existence which he has been prepared to struggle against and . transform into a new civilized world

Thus the more the leader�s heart is filled with the triviality of the civilization he is fighting

and the clearer is his sense that it is no more than a speck of dust on the long path of , human civilization , the more he is ready from a psychological angle , to oppose , resist . and persevere in his efforts against it until victory is achieved

It is clear , therefore , that the scope required from this psychological attitude ought to be proportionate to the size of change to be brought about and what needs to be rooted out of civilization and existence . So , whenever the opposition is to a mightier existence and a loftier and deeply rooted civilization , the greater is the thrust . required from this psychological attitude

Since the message of the appointed day is to change , in a comprehensive way , a world filled with injustice and tyranny , it is therefore natural that it is looking for an individual whose psychological attitude is superior to that whole world; a person whose age exceeds those who were born in that world and who were brought up in the shade of its civilization which he is to destroy and replace with one based on justice and truth . For whoever is brought up in a deeply�rooted civilization , that dominates the world with its values and modes of thinking , would be overwhelmed by it , since he would have been born while it had been in existence , and opened his eyes just to see its different aspects , and would have been

brought up under its power and influence . Unlike that is a person who has deeply penetrated history , who has come to life long before that civilization which completes the cycle of the story of humanity before the appointed day saw the light . He sees it as little seeds , hardly visible , then gradually growing and taking roots within human societies , waiting for the right moment to blossom and appear . Then he witnesses it , as it starts to grow and advance , sometimes relapsing , sometimes meeting with success , then when it begins to prosper and become gigantic , gradually dominating the destinies of the world , such a man who has lived through all these stages with sagacity and caution , watching this giant - against which he has to struggle - under that long historical perspective which he has lived in reality , and not just read about in books of history , such an individual would consider it as a definite destiny , unlike Jean Jacques Rousseau�s consideration of the monarchy in France , when he was terrified at the mere imagining of France without a king in spite of the fact that he was one of the heralds , both intellectually and philosophically , of the evolution of the political situation that existed in those times . That was because Rousseau lived in the shade and under the influence of the monarchy.

On the other hand this individual who has thoroughly penetrated history ,

would have the dignity and strength of history and a powerful sense that all that surrounds him of civilization and existence was born at a certain time in history , when the way was paved for its existence , that it would disappear to the extent that nothing of it would remain as when there was nothing of it before it came into existence in the distant or near past , that the historical life spans of any civilization , however long they may be , are only limited days in the long era of history.

Have you not read the chapter of the cave in the Quran (surah al�Kahf) ?! Have you not read of those youths who believed in their Lord , whom Allah increased in guidance , who opposed a ruling pagan existence that was ruthless and did not hesitate to suppress every single seed of at�Tawheed (Unity of Allah) so that it might not rise above the level of idolatry . So these youths became depressed to the point of despair , once the windows of hope had been closed before their eyes; so they sought refuge in the cave , where they begged Allah for a solution to their problem after having exhausted all the possibilities . For they could not tolerate the fact that falsehood was ruling , transgressing and subjugating the truth and suppressing anyone whose heart showed an inclination towards the truth . Do you know what Allah did to them ? He made them sleep

for three hundred and nine years in that cave and caused them to rise up from their long sleep and sent them to the outside world , after that the existence which had bewildered them with its power and transgression had collapsed and became a chapter in history that could frighten no one nor activate anything . They were brought out so that they could see all this with their own eyes and learn that .falsehood is insignificant

Indeed if this clear vision had been true in the case of the people of the cave , with all that it bore of psychological loftiness and thrust out of that unique event which prolonged their age by three hundred years , then the same event could occur in the case of al�Mahdi , the Expected Leader , whose extended age would make him see .the giant as a dwarf , the tall tree as a seed and the hurricane a breeze

Add to this that the experience that is granted by the concomitants of those consecutive civilizations and the direct confrontation with all their movements and changes , has a great influence on the intellectual preparation and the deepening of experience of the Expected Leader , since it puts him face to face with the many various practices of others , with all they contain of weakness and strength , and the different aspects of their errors and accuracy . And this enables him to classify the social symptoms with a complete awareness of their causes

. and their historical circumstances

Moreover the preserved operation of change , which is the task of the Expected Leader , is founded on a particular message , namely the message of Islam . Therefore , it is natural that in this case , the required leadership should be more proximate with the original sources of Islam , that his personality be fully shaped in an independent way , free from the influence of that civilization which is subject to his struggle on the appointed day , unlike that individual who would have been born and brought up in its atmosphere , whose intellect and feelings would have blossomed within its frame . Quite often such a person cannot free himself from the effects and . residues of that civilization , even if he were to lead a movement of change against it

Thus , in order that the preserved leader be not influenced by the civilization he has been prepared to transform , it is necessary that his personality should be fully shaped during a previous stage of civilization , as near as possible to the universal spirit , and in terms of the principles of that civilized condition , which the appointed . day is aiming at realizing under his leadership

How Was The Preparation Of The Expected Leader Achieved

How could the preparation of the Expected Leader be achieved , while we know that he only remained five years with his father , al�Imam al�Askari – which is a period , of childhood not sufficient for the maturity of his personality . Therefore

? under what circumstances has this achievement taken place

Al�Mahdi (peace be upon him) was appointed as a successor to his father , for the leadership of the Muslims , which means that he was an Imam in the fullest . intellectual and spiritual sense of the word in a very early age of his noble life

Moreover , the early Imamate (leadership) is a previous phenomenon in the case of his forefathers (peace be upon them all) , for example , al�Imam Mohammed son of Ali al�Jawad (peace be upon him) . We call it a phenomenon because it was given in the case of al�Mahdi�s forefathers (peace be upon them) , a perceptible and a practical meaning , which the Muslims have lived and been aware of , in all their experiences with the Imams , in one way or another . Therefore , we cannot claim the proof of a clearer and wider phenomenon than the experience of a whole community . : So , we can clarify the issue in the following points

The leadership of the Imams of Ahlol�Bayt (descendants of the Prophet) has never ١ been one of the centers of influence and power that are transmitted through inheritance , from father to son , with the full support of the ruling regime , as was the case , in the leadership of Fatimid caliphs and the Abbasid; but it has always won the good will of its wider popular bases , on the grounds of their intellectual and spiritual conviction about

. the worth of the Imamate for the leadership of Islam

These popular bases have existed since the dawn of Islam and became wider during ٢ the times of the two Imams : al�Baqir and as�Sadiq (peace be upon them) . The school that these two Imams led within the boundaries of these bases formed a very wide trend that stretched all over the world of Islam , bringing together hundreds of jurists (fuqahaa) theologians (mutakallimoon) and commentators (mufassiroon) on the Quran and the learned in the different branches of Islamic and human sciences that were predominant in those times , to the extent that al�Hasan son of Ali al�Washsha said : �I went into al�Kufah Mosque and found nine hundred shaykhs � �all of them were saying , �Ja�far son of Mohammed related to us

This school and what it represented of popular bases from Islamic society , had ٣ certain conditions which it believed in and abode by , in the appointment of the Imam and his suitability for the role because it believed that an individual cannot be . appointed as Imam unless he is the most learned among the agnostic of his time

That both this school and its popular bases were ready to give sacrifices , for the (٤ sake of their belief in the Imamate , since the latter was considered , in the opinion of the concomitant leadership , as a hostile line , even from an intellectual point of view . This was the reason that led the authorities to carry

out several campaigns of purging and torture to the extent that many people were either killed or were put into prisons , while hundreds of them died in the darkness of the cells . This meant that those who believed in the Imamate were ready to pay a lot , and the only instigation they had was their nearness to Allah .

۵) The Imams – these bases yielded – to were not isolated from them , only when the authorities prosecuted them or sent them into exile . This is what we come to know through the narrators who related to us the events of each one among the twelve Imams , and on the one hand from what has been copied from the letters that they sent to their contemporaries and the trips that they took , and on the other hand from representatives that they dispatched to the different corners of the Islamic world , as well as the frequent visits that the Shi�ahs used to pay to their Imams in the holy city of Medina , when they went to the sacred lands for the performance of the holy rites of hajj . All of these factors show an uninterrupted interaction between the Imam and his popular bases , that stretched over the different parts of the world of Islam , with all their different classes including the learned as well as the others .

۶) That the caliphate which was contemporary with the Imams (peace be upon them) used to consider their

spiritual leadership as a great threat against its existence and its destiny . Because of that it deployed all of its efforts for the sake of disintegrating that leadership and bore a lot of negativism in that respect , sometimes appearing under the guise of cruelty and transgression when its security was at stake . The campaigns of persecution and victimization were a permanent event with respect to the Imam , in spite of what that left behind of sadness and disgust among the Muslims and their supporters from the .different classes of society

If we take these six points into consideration knowing that they are all historical facts , :it leaves no room for doubt , and we come out with the following result

The phenomenon of the early Imamate was a fact and not an illusion . Because the Imam who emerges while still young and declares openly that he is the spiritual and the intellectual leader of the Muslim community as a whole , and whom that wide trend pledges its loyalty , must surely be in possession of a remarkable , let alone a very wide knowledge and agnosis and a very wide horizon as well as a proficiency in jurisdiction , exegesis and the articles of faith , otherwise the popular bases would not be convinced of his spiritual leadership . We should also bear in mind the fact that the Imams took certain positions that made the interaction with their bases possible and threw different lights on their way

. of life and personality

Do you think then that a young child who declares his Imamate (spiritual leadership) and hoists out of it a flag for Islam , with the full knowledge of the masses among his popular bases who believe in him and are prepared to sacrifice their lives and security without taking the trouble to discover his condition , or without being incited by the phenomenon of the early Imamate to inquire about the validity of the situation and !? the establishment of the worth of this young Imam

Now supposing that people did not attempt to assess the situation , would it then be possible that after days , months or even years , the whole affair would go unnoticed without its truth coming to the surface , although there has been a natural and ! constant interaction between the young Imam and the rest of the people

Is it rational that the worth of a young child�s way of thinking and knowledge would !? not be obvious after this long interaction

If we assume that the popular bases of the Imams of Ahlol�Bayt (descendants of the Prophet) were not able to discover the truth of the matter , why did the existing ? caliphate keep silent and did not attempt to find out , if it were for its benefit

Nothing could have been easier for the authorities then if the Imam had been a child , quite immature in his education and way of thinking , the normal case in all children

.

No plan would have been more successful than to present this child to his supporters (the Shi�ah) and others and prove to them that he was not fit for the Imamate and the intellectual and spiritual leadership.

If it is indeed difficult to convince people of a man in his forties or fifties, already in possession of a great deal of education for the role of the Imamate, there can be no difficulty in convincing them of the incapacity of an ordinary child for the same role, in the sense that the Shi�ah know, regardless of his intelligence and awareness.

All this would have been possible and easier than the complicated means of suppression and recklessness which the authorities resorted to in those times.

The only explanation for the caliphate�s hesitation in playing this card, is that it realized that the early Imamate was a real phenomenon and not an invented idea. The truth is that it had realized the fact after it had attempted to play that card but failed. History relates to us many of these attempts and their failure, while it does not mention at all the occurrence of a situation in which the phenomenon of early Imamate was put into question, where the Imam was confronted with difficulties or complications which surpassed his ability or shook people�s trust in him.

This is what we mean when we said earlier that the early Imamate is a real phenomenon in the life of Ahlol�Bayt

descendants of the Prophet) , moreover this phenomenon has similar roots and) situations in the Divine heritage that stretched over all the messages and the Divine leadership . It is enough to cite one example of an early leader ship of Ahlol�Bayt : ((peace be upon them) in the case of Yahya (peace be upon him

O Yahya ! take hold of the Book with strength . And We granted him wisdom while � (yet a child . � (Quran , ١٩ : ١٢

Now that the early leadership has been proved as an existing and real phenomenon in Ahlol�Bayt�s life there is no more objection to the leadership of al�Imam . al�Mahdi (peace be upon him) nor to his succession to his father while very young

? How Can We Believe In The Existence Of Al�Mahdi

Supposing that the hypothesis of the Expected Leader and all that it comprehends of prolonged life , early leadership and a silent absence , is possible , that would not be enough proof for his existence , thus , how can we indeed believe in the existence of ? al�Mahdi

Would some narratives related in books on the Great Messenger (peace and blessing of Allah be upon him and his progeny) be enough for perfect conviction in the existence of the Twelfth Imam , in spite of what this supposition bears of peculiarity ? and deviation from the norms

How can we prove that al�Mahdi had a true historical existence and that he is not only an assumption , for which psychological circumstances have been combined to confirm his existence in many people�s

? minds

The idea of al�Mahdi , as the Expected Leader , who will change the world for the best , has been already mentioned in several of the narratives (ahadeeth) related from the Great Messenger in general , and the Imams of Ahlol�Bayt in particular . Moreover , it has been reconfirmed , with a degree beyond doubt , in many texts . I could count up to four hundred narratives of the Prophet (peace be upon him and his progeny) which reached us through our brothers , the Sunnis , (e . g . , the book al�Mahdi written by my uncle as�Sayyid Sadroddeen as�Sadr , may Allah bless his noble soul) , as well as a great number of reports about al�Imam al�Mahdi through both the Shiites and the Sunnis – nearly more than six thousand narratives , (e . g . , the book entitled Montakhab al�Athar fil�Imam Ath�thani�Ashar or Selection of traditions concerning the Twelfth Imam by ash�Shaykh Lotfillah as�Safi) , which is . very high statistical number , not found in many of the self�evident Islamic issues

As regards the materialization of this idea in the Twelfth Imam (peace be upon him) we do possess enough justifications to be convinced that he is the one . They can be . summed up into two groups of evidence : the first Islamic , and the other scientific

By the Islamic evidence we confirm the existence of the Expected Leader . By the scientific evidence , we can prove that al�Mahdi is not just

a myth or a supposition but a reality which has been confirmed by historical . experience

The Islamic evidence appears in the hundreds of narratives related from Allah�s Messenger (peace and blessing of Allah be upon him and his progeny) and the Imams of Ahlol�Bayt (peace be upon them) , which prove that al�Mahdi will be appointed as Imam , that he is from the descendants of the Prophet and Fatima and the ninth . descendants from al�Hosayn , that the caliphs (Prophet�s successors) are twelve

All of these narratives limited that universal idea by personifying it in al�Mahdi , the Twelfth Imam of Ahlol�Bayt . Moreover they reached a great number and diffusion , although the Imams took a great precaution and care , fearing their exposure on a general level , in order to protect the righteous descendants against assassination or . an unpredicted assault on his life

However , the numerical abundance of these narratives is not the only reason for their validity , for in addition to this , there are certain virtues and coherences to be . taken into account for proving their validity

The Prophet�s narratives (ahadeeth) about the fact that the Imams , caliphs , or Ameers – depending on the style of the narrative in its different ways – are twelve . Some writers counted up to more than two hundred and seventy narratives taken from the most well�known books of Sunni and Shi�ah traditions such as al�Bukhari , Muslim , at�Tirmidhi , Abo Dawood and the collection of Ahmad bin

Hanbal and the Rectification of the Judge on the Two Saheehs (al�Hakim , Mustadrak �alas�Sahihayn) . We should bear in mind here that al�Bukhari who had compiled these narratives , was a contemporary to both al�Imam al�Hadi and al�Imam al�Askari which means quite a lot , since it proves that the narratives were recorded from the Prophet (peace and blessing of Allah be upon him and his progeny) before that the realization of their contents and the idea of the Twelfth Imam had materialized . This means , therefore , that there is no room left for doubt , that the recording of the narratives was not influenced by the fact of the Twelfth Imam , or that it might have been a reflection of it , because the false narratives (ahadeeth) that are related from the Prophet (peace and blessing of Allah be upon him and his progeny) are either a reflection or a justification for a fact occurring later in time . Now , they did not precede in their appearance and recording in the books , that fact which they came to reflect , therefore , as long as we possess the material evidence , which is that the mentioned narrative had already preceded the historical sequence of the twelve Imams , and that it had been recorded in the books of ahadeeth (books of traditions) before that the event took place , we can be sure that this narrative is not a reflection of an event but an expression to a

truth from Allah , uttered by the one who did not speak out of fancy (the Holy Prophet) : when he said

Surely the caliphs after me are twelve� . So , the event of the twelve Imams was� fulfilled , starting with al�Imam Ali and ending in al�Mahdi , this way being the only . rational interpretation to that noble narrative of the Prophet

As far as the scientific evidence is concerned , it is formed out an experience , lived by a community of people , lasting nearly seventy years , which we call the period of the minor occultation (al�Ghayba as�Sughra) . To elucidate this point , we will pave the . way by giving a brief description

This minor occultation makes the first phase in the Imamate of the Expected Leader (peace be upon him) . From the time that had been predestined , from the time he assumed the role , he remained hidden from the outside world , distant from all the events that were taking place although being at the same time proximate to them in . his mind and heart

We should bear in mind that had this occultation occurred suddenly , the result would have been a great shock among the popular masses , who believed in the Imamate since they were used to contacting their Imam in every period , to consulting him for solutions to their various problems . Thus , had he suddenly vanished , his supporters would have felt cut off from spiritual and intellectual leadership

Such an event would have created an enormous gap which would have thoroughly . shaken the whole structure and undermined its unity . Therefore , it proved necessary that the way should be paved to this occultation , so that these bases might get used . to it and gradually adapt themselves to the new situation

So the plan was this minor occultation , during which al�Imam al�Mahdi vanished from the universal scene , while keeping in touch with his popular bases and supporters through his delegates or representatives and the most reliable among his companions , who acted as a link between the Imam and those who believed in his . line

The position of representative of the Imam was held in those times , by four personalities , whom the popular bases agreed as to their fear of Allah , piety and : integrity . They were

;Othman bin Sa�id al�Amri ۱

;Mohammed bin Othman bin Sa�id al�Amri ۲

Abol�Qasim al�Hosayn bin Ruh; and ۳

. Abol�Hasan Ali bin Mohammed as�Samuri (۴

These four individuals assumed the role of representative of the Imam (al�Mahdi) according to the above classification . So whenever one of them died , the other . (succeeded him , after being designated by al�Imam al�Mahdi (peace be upon him

The representative of the Imam used to get in touch with the Shi�ahs and submit their questions and problems to the Imam and return to them with his answers . Sometimes orally and very often in a written form . So these masses who lacked the vision of

. their Imam , found some comfort and consolation in these indirect communications

Moreover they could notice that the signatures and the letters were all written in the same way , during the time of the four representatives that lasted nearly seventy years . The last representative , as�Samuri , declared that the period of the minor occultation , which was characterized by the designated delegates , was over; that the period of the major occultation , in which there would be no designated individuals to mediate between the Imam and the Shiites , had began . This transition meant that the minor occultation had already accomplished its mission and achieved its goal , since it immunized the Shiites against the great shock and the feeling of the profound gap caused by the Imam�s occultation . In that way , it enabled them to adapt themselves to the situation and gradually prepared them to accept the idea of general representation on behalf of the Imam . By this token the latter changed from a representation by a designated individual to a more general line manifested in the Just Mujtahid (a legalist who arrives at an independent judgment) , who has a keen insight into the religious and worldly issues of the Muslims , in view of the transition . from the minor to the major occultation

Now you can have an idea about the situation , in the light of what has been discussed up to now , so you can clearly realize that al�Mahdi is a

reality that a community of people has lived and which has been expressed for seventy years , by the representatives and the mediators of the Imam , whom no one . could suspect of cheating nor of playing on words

Can you imagine – by your Lord – that a lie could survive for nearly seventy years , which four individuals would successively assume and agree upon and continue to interact with others on its basis as if it were a reality that they lived; that nothing would escape their control , which would cause a doubt in people�s minds; that there would be no particular relation between the four through which they could gain the trust of every one and their belief in the truth of the matter , which they pretend to ? live and feel

An old proverb said , �The rope of lies is short�; also logic in life confirms the fact that it is impossible that a lie could survive in this way and for all time through these . relations and still wins everyone�s confidence

Thus , the phenomenon of the minor occultation can be considered as a scientific experiment which has confirmed the factual objectivity of the Imam�s existence , his birth , life and occultation , on account of which he has been hidden from the world . and has not revealed himself to anyone ever since

? Why Has The Leader Not Appeared Yet

? Why has the leader not appeared during all this long period

If he were really prepared to assume his social work , and

the conditions for any social and transformative work were much simpler and easier and when the leader�s relation with the people – owing to the minor occultation organizations – could have made it possible for him to organize the ranks and start the work with strength , and

the authorities that existed then did not have that tremendous level of strength and ٢ power which humanity has achieved thanks to its technical and scientific evolution , then

what prevented him from emerging during the period of the minor occultation or after ? , instead of extending it into a greater one

The success of any operation of social change is bound by certain conditions and . objective circumstances without which it cannot achieve its aims

However all the operations of social change that are sent to earth from heaven are marked by the fact that the contents of their message are not bound by any objective circumstance . Since the message on which the whole operation depends is of the Lord�s making and is not created by these objective circumstances , but rather relies on them on its executive side as well as for its timing . Heaven waited five centuries of ignorance (al�jahiliyya) before sending its last message into the hands of the Prophet Mohammed (peace and blessing of Allah be upon him and his progeny) , since the connection that should exist between the objective circumstances and the execution required its postponement although the world had been waiting for it for a . long time

Among the objective

circumstances that have an effect on the executive part in the operation of change , are those that create the right climate and the general atmosphere for the intended change , while others form some details required by the movement of change in its elaboration . Far example , in the case of the operation of change led by Lenin in Russia , this operation was connected to an important factor manifested in the first world war and the decline of the Tsar , which played a major part in creating the appropriate climate for the operation of change . It was also linked to partial and limited factors such Lenin�s health , during his trip and when he entered Russia and led the revolution . For had he met with an incident while on his way , he would have . been delayed and the revolution would have lost its ability for that swift move

However , the unchangeable custom of Allah in every Divine operation of change proceeded , in its executive side , in accordance with the objective circumstances that . created the appropriate climate and the general atmosphere for its success

Hence Islam came only after a great gap and long period which lasted for centuries . after the messengers

Although Allah , the Exalted , could have overcome all the obstacles and difficulties that were on the way of the Divine message and created the appropriate climate by way of miracles , He preferred not to use such a style , since the

tests , trials and the afflictions that make the human being perfect required that this . Divine task be natural and objective

However , this did not prevent Allah , the Exalted , from interfering from time to time with some details that did not shape the appropriate climate but which were sometimes needed for the movement within such a climate such as the support that Allah , the Exalted , bestows on his saints during some of their difficult moments , so as to protect the message . So suddenly Numrud�s fire becomes cool and a peace for Ibraheem . When the traitor�s hand which was bearing the sword to strike the Prophet�s hand was suddenly paralyzed and lost its ability to strike , also when suddenly the storm swept away the unbelievers and the polytheists camps , when they were encircling Medina , on the Day of the Ditch (yawmol�Khandaq) , thus terrorizing them . However , all of these events did not go beyond certain details and the provision of assistance during some decisive moments after the appropriate atmosphere had been already formed for the operation of change in a natural way . and in accordance with the objective circumstances

In this light , we can examine al�Mahdi�s position to find that the operation of change , for which he had been prepared , is linked , on the executive side , as is the case with any other operation of social change to certain objective circumstances that participate in securing the convenient climate

. under which it will occur

We must bear in mind that al�Mahdi has not been prepared for a limited social task nor for an operation of change limited to a particular part of the world or another . Since the message which Allah decreed for him has been a comprehensive change of the whole world and the leadership of humanity away from the darkness of transgression to the light of justice . However , it is not enough for this great operation that its message and its leader be made available , for otherwise its conditions would have been fulfilled in the time of the Prophet (peace be upon him and his progeny) . Rather , an operation of such a scale requires a worldwide climate and a universal . atmosphere which will fulfill the required objective circumstances for its realization

From a human perspective we should consider the feeling that the man of civilization experiences of exhaustion as an essential factor for the creation of that appropriate climate , which paves the way for the acceptance of the new message of justice . This feeling is established and implanted through the various experiments of civilization , out of which man comes overloaded with negativism regarding what has been built , and realizes his need for help , thereupon turning with his natural disposition to the . unseen or the unknown

From a material angle , it is possible that modern conditions of life are better equipped to realize the aims of the message worldwide than the

conditions that existed in the previous periods – such as the period of the minor occultation – owing to what has been achieved in terms of shorter distances and a greater ease of interaction between the different nations of the world , as well as the availability of instruments and means that a central organization needs in order to carry out its programs for the awareness of the different nations of the world and . their education on the bases of the new message

Yet what I hinted at here , which is a fact , is the growth of military strength and equipment that faces the leader of the appointed day whenever his appearance is . delayed

But to what avail can the growth of the material aspect be , when they already exists a psychological defeat for it from within and the spiritual collapse of that man who ? possesses all these equipment and power

Indeed many were the occasions , in history , when the gigantic structure of a whole civilization collapsed only with the smallest conquering gesture . That was because it has been already falling apart and loosing confidence in its existence and trust in its . reality

? Can An Individual Assume This Role

? Can an individual , however great he may be , achieve this great role

Is not such an individual only that one who is selected by circumstances and faced ? with the realization of their movement

The idea here , is related to a particular view of history which interprets the latter on the basis that

man is only a secondary factor in it , while the objective strength that surrounds him is the essentials . In this sense the individual can only be , in the best of situations , the intelligent expression to that essential factor .

However , we had already made it clear , in other chapters of our printed books , that history is made up of two poles : The first one being man and the second the material strength that surrounds him . Thus , while this material strength , the circumstances of production and nature affect man , the latter also exerts an influence upon them . Moreover , there is no evidence for the assumption that the movement starts from material conditions and ends up with man , except when there is an evidence for the contrary , since both factors interact in time . Therefore , within this framework , an individual can be more than a parrot in the historical trend , especially when we take into account his relation with heaven , since the latter intervenes , then , as a guiding power to this historical trend . That has been the case in the history of all the prophets , especially the last one since by virtue of the relation of his message with heaven , the Prophet Mohammed (peace and blessing of Allah be upon him and his progeny) , assumed by himself the reins of the historical movement and started a civilized expansion which the objective circumstances

that existed around him , could not bring about in any case , as we have already . mentioned in the introduction of al�Fatawa al�Waziha

Therefore , what had been achieved at the hands of the Great Messenger could occur also at the hands of the Expected Leader from among his progeny whom he . announced and whose role he hinted at

? How Will The Change On The Appointed Day Occur

How can we can form an image about what will be accomplished at the hands of this individual in terms of a decisive victory for justice and an end to the existence of ? transgression that he is faced with

The limited answer for this question is related to the knowledge of the time and the phase in which al�Mahdi (peace be upon him) is supposed to emerge to the world , as well as the possible assumption regarding what peculiarities and close relations , might characterize that phase so as to be able to draw , in that light , the shape that . the operation of change would take and the path that it would follow

But as long as we do not know anything concerning that phase , its environment nor its circumstances , we cannot scientifically predict what would take place on the appointed day , although we can imagine or give certain assumptions in this respect , . which are founded on theoretical bases and not on realistic grounds

There is one basic assumption which we can adopt in the light of the previous narratives we mentioned earlier , as well as

in the light of the great operations of change in the course of history , namely the appearance of al�Mahdi (peace be upon him) after a great gap which will result in a shocking decadence and a crisis is civilization . This gap will give the opportunity for the message to expand and the decadence of civilization will prepare the psychological atmosphere for its acceptance .

However , this decadence in civilization is not a mere incident that will occur suddenly in the history of human civilization , but a natural result of a contradiction in history that is cut off from Allah , the Exalted , that cannot reach a decisive solution of the end of its course , so that its fire will burn leaving nothing in its path and the light will then appear to establish a Divine justice on earth .

ENDNOTE

[۱] (s . a . w .) : Salla Allahu alayhi wa Aalih : may Allah's peace and blessing be upon him (and his progeny) .

[۲] (a . s .) : 'alay�hi/ha/himus�Salam : may peace be upon him/her/them) .

[۳] Montakhabol Aathar , Lotfillah Saafi Golpaygani sec . iii chp . ۱

[۴] Montakhabol Aathar , Lotfillah Saafi Golpaygani sec . i chp . ۴

[۵] Montakhabol Aathar , Lotfillah Saafi Golpaygani sec . ii , chp . ۴

[۶] Montakhabol Aathar , Lotfillah Saafi Golpaygani sec . ii chp . ۲۱

[۷] al�Amali ash�Shaykh as�Sadooq , p . ۴۸۹

[۸] Ithbatol�Hodat , ash�Shaykh Hor al�Aamili , vol . vi , p . ۴۱۷

[۹] Ithbatol�Hodat ,

ash�Shaykh Hor al�Aamili , vol . vi , p . ۴۲۷

[۱۰] Some of these traditions have been compiled in this valuable book : Montakhabol Athar fil�Imam Ath�thani�Ashar , by Lotfillah Saafi Golpaygani .

[۱۱] A short index of these books can be found in this book : an�Najm ath�Thaaqib by Haj Mirza Hosayn Tabrasi .

[۱۲] Refer to Maqatilit�Talibyyeen , by Abol�Faraj Isfahani , which is the compendium of the names of the martyrs of the offspring of Ali bin Abi�Talib (a . s .) up to the year of its compilation , i . e . ۳۱۳A . H .

[۱۳] Ithbatol�Wasyya , by Abol�Hasan Ali bin al�Hosayn al�Masoodi , p . ۴۳۵

[۱۴] Al�Kafi , Kitab al�Hojja , Chapter on the Birth of Abi Mohammed al�Hasan bin Ali (a . s .) , by Mohammed bin Yaqoob al�Kulayni .

[۱۵] Irshad , by ash�Shaykh al�Mofeed , chapter on the death of Abi Mohammed al�Hasan bin Ali (a . s .) ,

[۱۶] al�Ghayba , by ash�Shaykh at�Toosi , p . ۱۶۰; Shawahidon�Nobowwa , by abdol�Rahman al�Jami al�Hanafi .

[۱۷] Yanaabeol�Mawadda , by Solayman bin Ibraheem al�Qandozi al�Hanafi . p . ۶۰

[۱۸] Sayyid bin Tawoos from Imam Hasan al�Askari (a . s .) .

[۱۹] Kamaloddeen , by ash�Shaykh as�Sadooq , vol . ii , p . ۱۰۴ .

[۲۰] al�Irshad , by ash�Shaykh al�Mofeed , chapter on the death of Abi Mohammed al�Hasan bin Ali (a . s .) .

[۲۱] Kamaloddeen , by ash�Shaykh as�Sadooq , vol . ii , p . ۱۰۴ .

[۲۲] al�Irshad , by

ash�Shaykh al�Mofeed , chpater on the Twelfth Imam

[۲۳] Kamaloddeen , by ash�Shaykh as�Sadooq , vol . ii , p . ۱۰۹ .

[۲۴] Itbatol�Hodat , by ash�Shaykh Hor al�Aamili , vol . vi , p . ۴۳۳ .

[۲۵] Itbatol�Hodat , by ash�Shaykh Hor al�Aamili , vol . vii , p . ۲۰ .

[۲۶] The names and proofs of the other deputies of the Imam�e�Zaman can be referred to in the books of ar�Rejal (biography) among them is Tanqeeh al�Maqaal , vol , i , p . ۲۲۰

[۲۷] al�Ghayba by ash�Shaykh at�Toosi , p . ۲۱۵

[۲۸] al�Ghayba by ash�Shaykh at�Toosi , p . ۲۱۵

[۲۹] Tareekh al�Ghaybatos�Sughra , by Mohammed as�Sadr , p . ۴۰۱

[۳۰] Tanqeeh al�Maqaal , by al�Mamaqani , vol . iii , p . ۱۴۹

[۳۱] al�Ghayba by ash�Shaykh at�Toosi , p . ۲۱۹ .

[۳۲] al�Ghayba by ash�Shaykh at�Toosi , p . ۲۲۰

[۳۳] Tareekh al�Ghaybatos�Sughra , by Mohammed as�Sadr , p . ۴۰۷

[۳۴] al�Ghayba by ash�Shaykh at�Toosi , p . ۲۳۶

[۳۵] Bihaar al�Anwaar by Allama al�Majlisi , Book on the Occultation , chp . ۲۱ , as quoated from Ghayba of Shalmghani .

[۳۶] al�Ghayba by ash�Shaykh at�Toosi , p . ۲۴۲ ۲۴۳

[۳۷] al�Kharaij , by Qotboddeen Rawandi quoating from Bihaar al�Anwaar of Allama al�Majlisi , chp . ۱۳ and ۲۱

[۳۸] Kaashif al�Ghomma , vol . iii , al�Manaqib , sec . iii , p . ۴۵۶

Montakhabol Athar by Lotfillah Saafi Golpaygani sec . ii , chp . ۲۹ [۳۹]

. Refer to an�Najm ath�Thaaqib by Haj Mirza Hosayn Tabrasi an�Noori , chp . ۷ [۴۰]

Kashfol�Hojja [۴۱]

. by Sayyid bin Tawoos , sec . ixxv , p . ۷۴

. Kashfol�Astaar by Haj Mirza Hosayn at�Tabrasi an�Noori , sec . i , p . ۱۸ [۴۲]

Bihaar al�Anwaar by Allama al�Majlisi , vol . iii , p . ۱۷۵ [۴۳]

Kamaloddeen , by ash�Shaykh as�Sadooq , chp . ۴۹ and Bihaar al�Anwaar by [۴۴]
. Allama al�Majlisi , vol . xiii , chp . ۳۶ . Ihtijaaj , by at�Tabrasi , vol . ii

al�Ghayba , by Nu�mani , p . ۱۰۷ [۴۵]

Montakhabol Aathar , Lotfillah Saafi Golpaygani sec . vii [۴۶]

Ilzam an�Naasib fi Ithbaat al�Hojja al�Ghaaib , by as�Shaykh Ali al�Yazdi [۴۷]
al�Hairi , p . ۵

Montakhabol Athar , sec . x , chp . ۵ [۴۸]

Kamaloddeen , by ash�Shaykh as�Sadooq , p . ۳۳۶ [۴۹]

Bihaar al�Anwaar by Allama al�Majlisi , vol . iii , p . ۱۲۶ [۵۰]

al�Ghayba , by Mohammed bin Ibraheem bin Jafar an�Numani , p . ۱۰۶ [۵۱]

About center

In the name of Allah

هَلْيَسْتَوِيالَّذِينَيَعْلَمُونَوَالَّذِينَلَايَعْلَمُونَ

?Are those who know equal to those who do not know

al-Zumar: ٩

:Introduction

Ghaemiyeh Computer Research Institute of Isfahan, from ٢٠٠٧, under the authority of Ayatollah Haj SayyedHasanFaqihImami (God blesses his soul), by sincere and daily efforts of university and seminary elites and sophisticated groups began its activities .in religious, cultural and scientific fields

:Manifesto

Ghaemiyeh Computer Research Institute of Isfahan in order to facilitate and accelerate the accessibility of researchers to the books and tools of research, in the field of Islamic science, and regarding the multiplicity and dispersion of active centers in this field

and numerous and inaccessible sources by a mere scientific intention and far from any kind of social, political, tribal and personal prejudices and currents, based on performing a project in the shape of (management of produced and published works from all Shia centers) tries to provide a rich and free collection of books and research papers for the experts, and helpful contents and discussions for the educated generation and all classes of people interested in reading, with various formats in the .cyberspace

:Our Goals are

(propagating the culture and teachings of Thaqalayn (Quran and Ahlulbayt p.b.u.t-

encouraging the populace particularly the youth in investigating the religious issues-

replacing useful contents with useless ones in the cellphones, tablets and computers-

providing services for seminary and university researchers-

spreading culture study in the publich-

paving the way for the publications and authors to digitize their works-

:Policies

acting according to the legal licenses-

relationship with similar centers-

avoiding parallel working-

merely presenting scientific contents-

mentioning the sources-

.It's obvious that all the responsibilities are due to the author

:Other activities of the institute

Publication of books, booklets and other editions-

Holding book reading competitions-

Producing virtual, three dimensional exhibitions, panoramas of religious and tourism- places

.Producing animations, computer games and etc-

Launching the website with this address: www.ghaemiyeh.com-

Fabricatingdramatic and speech works-

Launching the system of answering religious, ethical and doctrinal questions-

Designing systems of accounting, media and mobile, automatic and handy systems,- web kiosks

Holding virtual educational courses for the public-

Holding virtual teacher-training courses-

Producing thousands of research software in three languages (Persian, Arabic and- English) which can be performed in computers, tablets and cellphones and available and downloadable with eight international formats: JAVA, ANDROID, EPUB, CHM, PDF, HTML, CHM, GHB on the website

Also producing four markets named "Ghaemiyeh Book Market" with Android, IOS,- WINDOWS PHONE and WINDOWS editions

:Appreciation

We would appreciate the centers, institutes, publications, authors and all honorable .friends who contributed their help and data to us to reach the holy goal we follow

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Commerce and sale: ۰۹۱۳۲۰۰۰۱۰۹
Users' affairs: ۰۹۱۳۲۰۰۰۱۰۹

Introduction of the Center – Ghaemiyeh Digital Library



Center of Computer
Researches
Ghaemiyeh
Isfahan
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